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# Siegen für Deutschland? Patriotism, Nationalism and the German National Football Team, 1954–2014

Kay Schiller\*

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**Abstract:** »Siegen für Deutschland? Patriotismus, Nationalismus und die Deutsche Fußball-Nationalmannschaft 1954–2014«. This article discusses the relationship between expressions of patriotism, nationalism and national identity and the fortunes of the German national football team by examining developments from the 1950s until the present. It analyses the varying degrees of identification of the Germans with their national team from the wave of enthusiasm that greeted the 1954 World Cup win to the more sober reception the team received thereafter which climaxed in the 'denationalization' of the national team during the 1974 World Cup. It then explains the renationalization of discourses and practices associated with the team from the late 1980s onwards to end with a discussion of the 'partyotism' during the 2006, 2010 and 2014 World Cups. The article argues that while the identification of the Germans with their national football team is a useful indicator of more general historical and cultural trends, one should not overestimate its relevance for determining the degree of nationalism in German society.

**Keywords:** Germany, football, nationalism, patriotism, national team, 1954, 1974, 2006, 2010, 2014.

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## 1. Introduction

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*Eins und zwei und drei und '54, '74, '90, 2010*

*Ja so stimmen wir alle ein*

*Mit dem Herz in der Hand und der Leidenschaft im Bein*

*Werden wir Weltmeister sein*

*One and two and three and '54, '74, '90, 2010*

*Yes, so we all sing*

*With our hearts in our hands and passion in our legs*

*We shall be world champions*

Sportfreunde Stiller

(Originally written for the 2006 World Cup, text edited in 2010)

While the German national football team advanced no further than the semi-finals during the FIFA World Cup in 2006, which Germany hosted, the country

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surprised itself and the world with a good-natured, festive and light-hearted patriotism during what was dubbed the ‘summer fairy-tale’ of June and July of that year. Think about the ubiquitous displays of the German colours in the public sphere, from flags on houses and in apartment windows and on cars, to black, red and gold bikini tops for car wing mirrors, to scarves, shirts, wigs, funny hats, Hawaiian flower necklaces, face-paint etc. in the German colours during street parties, at motorcades, at ‘public viewings’ in many towns and cities and, most prominently, with up to a million fans congregating during Germany games and celebrating on the ‘fan mile’ in Berlin which extended from the Brandenburg Gate to the Victory Column. Since then expressions of German ‘banal nationalism’ (Billig 1995) have become increasingly normal. They have been repeated during the European football championships in 2008 and 2012 and the 2010 and 2014 tournaments in South Africa and Brazil and, to a lesser degree, the 2007 Handball World Championships and the FIFA Women’s Football World Cup in 2011, both of which were also hosted in Germany.

These expressions of a *patriotisme bon-enfant* (French newspaper *Le Monde*, quoted in Raithel 2014, 364) and ‘partyotism’ (Wollenhaupt 2009) have led to a number of arguments and questions. For example, whether what one observed in terms of a self-confident and creative display and therefore positive identification with the symbols of the German nation on occasion of the World Cup finals in Germany and South Africa was ‘new’ and different from German nationalism of earlier times? Was it a sign of the country’s normality vis-à-vis other nations some sixty years after the end of National Socialism?

Needless to say that this is how the German grand coalition government under Angela Merkel wanted to portray the phenomenon (Bundesregierung 2006). Was this a ‘benevolent patriotism’ as opposed to an ‘aggressive nationalism’? In an analysis of political attitudes in the US, social psychologists Rick Kosterman and Seymour Feshbach distinguished the two by defining nationalism as reflecting an ‘apperception of national superiority and an orientation toward national dominance’; whereas patriotism relates to ‘the affective component of one’s feeling towards one’s country [...] It assesses the degree of love and pride in one’s nation’ (1989, 271). Related to this question, another one arose: Was the positive identification with players of African, Turkish or Polish ethnic background like Jerome Boateng, Sami Khedira, Mesut Özil, Lukas Podolski or Miroslav Klose indicative of the Germans’ acceptance that theirs is a multi-ethnic nation, perhaps even of a German endorsement of multiculturalism?

And, was it possible to draw more general conclusions from the behaviour of these crowds about the general population’s attitude toward the nation? More generally, how deeply rooted are shifts in the expression of nationalist sentiment on occasion of football tournaments in the national psyche? Was this more than just short-lived euphoria, even though it has been claimed that euphoria is ‘a well-known element of sports nationalism’ (Goksøyr 2010, 278)? Is football history therefore indeed a ‘good seismograph for changes in [the] cultural tec-

tonics' (Pyta 2006, 19) of nations? And are these expressions of 'banal nationalism,' which are not limited to Germany but an international phenomenon, significant building blocks for a positive identification with the nation?

Or: Is this enthusiasm for the national team and the national symbols perhaps no more than a fleeting fad, a way for the nation to have a further carnival, a party and festive celebration, here today and gone and forgotten tomorrow, the day after or, at the very latest, a few years later? For the latter outcome, consider the example of the French national team at the World Cups in 1998 and in 2010. In 1998 winning with a *black-blanc-beur* team was accompanied by a wave of enthusiasm for 'Zizou' Zidane and the multiethnic France he symbolized in the eyes of the public. It has been argued that the event helped in reducing ethnic tensions and unified the nation (Dauncey and Hare 1999; Dubois 2011; Sonntag 2014). When France embarrassingly went out of the tournament at the group stages in the 2010 World Cup, however, the praise for the players of (North-)African descent was turned on its head. The French public did not hold the French Football Association responsible which stuck with Coach Raymond Domenech who had obviously lost the confidence of the players during a lacklustre qualification campaign. Rather, the blame was laid squarely at the doors of the black and *beur* players who had been feted so exuberantly twelve years earlier. The media and a large part of the political and intellectual establishment saw in them, and especially in Florent Malouda and Nikolas Anelka, the brothers of the ghetto kids who had rioted in the *banlieus* in 2005, overpaid and with no respect for authority, nor a sense of duty towards the nation at large. It was as if the 1998 World Cup had never happened.

In the German case as well there is evidence to suggest that anti-foreigner sentiment in general did not decrease as a result of the 2006 World Cup. The sociologists around Wilhelm Heitmeyer argue in their longitudinal study *Deutsche Zustände* (German Conditions) that other factors, such as September 11, the Hartz IV legislation that dramatically limited access to social security in the Federal Republic after 2005 and the various economic crises since 2008 were much more important than the national team. These problems led to increases in day-to-day intolerance and prejudice against ethnic minorities in Germany (especially Heitmeyer 2006, 2011). The multi-ethnic composition of the national team and the party-atmosphere at the 'public viewings' therefore did not have any positive effect.

In the following I will try to find some answers for the above questions by tracing the development of German national identity and football nationalism through a few episodes of the history of the German national football team in the post-war era. The analysis will show that the relationship between the national team and German national identity was never straightforward and uncomplicated. Moreover, the analysis will demonstrate that episodes of closeness between the nation and the team alternated with periods of greater emotional distance. These were felt not only by the spectators but the players as

well. In this fashion the relationship between the nation and the national team reflected more general trends in German society.

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## 2. The 'Miracle of Berne'

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The event which until this day seems to be of crucial importance in investing football in post-war Germany with a meaning beyond sport for national identity was the so-called 'miracle of Berne.' This was the World Cup final on 4 July 1954 which West Germany won 3:2 and turned the Wankdorf Stadium in the Swiss capital into a German *lieu de mémoire*. In spite of later understandings which emphasized the 'miraculous' nature of this football victory vis-à-vis the German military defeat in World War II, the outcome of the final was understood originally purely as a 'miracle' in football terms (Schmitz-Dräger 2011, 43). This was because the underdog had beaten the favourite and the West German team had come back from two goals down against a Hungarian team hitherto considered invincible. At the time the Hungarians around their star player Ferenc Puskás were the best team in the world. In 1953 they had achieved the hitherto unthinkable by demolishing England at home, previously unbeaten at Wembley, 6:3 and by inflicting England's heaviest defeat ever in Budapest with 7:1 just before the 1954 World Cup. And they had convincingly beaten the West Germans 8:3 at an earlier stage during the 1954 tournament.

While the beginnings of the 1954 World Cup tournament were barely followed in Germany, the further the team progressed, the more interested German audiences both in the Federal Republic and the GDR became. Not only was there an increasing flood of Germans into Switzerland attending the matches of the team, the final was the first sports spectacle in Germany which was also a major media event. Neither Max Schmeling knocking out Joe Louis in their world heavyweight bout in 1936, nor the Berlin Olympics of the same year commanded similar public attention. With only 30.000 television sets for all of the Federal Republic in 1954, the importance of the new medium was still limited, but towns were virtually deserted on that Sunday afternoon in July, as Germans East and West were listening on the radio (Brüggemeier 2004, 210-2). With Herbert Zimmermann's last words during the radio broadcast of the match ('Over, over, Germany are World Champions! You may think that I'm crazy, think that I lost my marbles...') over time acquiring a prominent position in popular memory, from then on football and the audiovisual media entered into a close alliance, each aiding in the other's meteoric rise during the post-war era (Pyta 2006, 11).

The victory was accompanied by a wave of national enthusiasm which found expression in the exuberant welcome the team received in the Federal Republic upon its return. In celebrations similar to those on occasion of the arrival of newly crowned monarchs at their residence, thousands stood by the

train tracks from the Swiss-German border onwards, tens of thousands crowded stations in the South-West of Germany whenever the ‘Red flash,’ the special train bringing home the team, stopped (Herzog 2014, 136). Players were then regaled with goods ranging from foodstuffs to sewing machines to Goggo motor scooters (Frei 1994, 191-3). And hundreds of thousands gathered in the centre of Munich where the team was officially welcomed by Bavarian Minister President Hans Ehard. The mass-circulation daily tabloid *BILD-Zeitung* headlined ‘Simply great: Munich exploded with joy’ or ‘Upon arrival in Munich: jubilation upon jubilation’ (Schmitz-Dräger 2011, 43).

In his cultural history of the 1954 World Cup finals Franz Brüggemeier stresses that the national enthusiasm that accompanied the football success was a short-lived affair and that therefore he could not agree with claims that ‘winning the title was experienced as compensation for the lost war, contributed to a new national identity and to the emotional foundation of the Federal Republic’ (2004, 328). The Freiburg historian rightly warns of the danger of anachronism, of *ex-post-facto* readings that contribute little to how an event was understood at the time. On the other hand, while this wave of national enthusiasm was as intense as short, its relevance should not be denied either. Arguably, it filled a symbolic void for a republic which suffered from an obvious lack of symbols in the early Adenauer years (Pyta 2006, 13). And other than the World Cup victory there was little else which offered itself to the Germans for a positive collective identification with the nation in the period before economic prosperity and mass consumption really took off.

The encoding of the victory in the media and popular culture as a result of the players’ faithful adherence to the nation and their male comradeship resonated with collective attitudes. It fitted well with the popular perception of the ordinary German soldier, the *Landser*, who had remained loyal to the nation and his comrades despite having been betrayed by the military and political leadership. While military heroes were no longer in demand after 1945, character traits like discipline, perseverance, toughness, combativeness and the ideal of male comradeship survived the war intact and served as an important ingredient for the reshaping of national identity (Knoch 2002, 125). The *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, the biggest paper in the Ruhr, explained the success in no uncertain terms: ‘A team of eleven comrades fighting unquestioningly did it’ (Pyta 2006, 12). In the same vein, *BILD* wrote that the men did ‘not give up the fight’ in the ‘battle of Bern.’ ‘They fought like only men can fight’ (Schmitz-Dräger 2011, 42).

Moreover, the public’s identification with the team was facilitated by the fact that in the 1950s the players’ socio-economic position roughly reflected that of the German population at large. Despite some of the players around team captain Fritz Walter becoming stars in the wake of the 1954 success, their income from football remained small and they could not be suspected to play for financial reward, not least because of the German FA’s (Deutscher Fußball-

Bund, DFB) reticence to fully professionalise elite football (Eggers 2004; Havemann 2013).

It is true that in the aftermath of the victory most prominent politicians of the Federal Republic did their utmost to play down the success and avoided to interpret it in political let alone nationalist terms, with neither Adenauer nor Federal President Theodor Heuss congratulating the team with any real enthusiasm but rather, in the eyes of one historian, making a show of their lack of interest (Blasius 2001, 116). This was because at that point in time most politicians and opinion leaders had yet to come to grips with the importance of football symbolism for the national psyche.

At the same time, the West German government minister responsible for sport, Interior Minister Gerhard Schröder, while tellingly preferring to attend the 1954 German Horse Racing Derby in Hamburg on the day of the final, officially welcomed the victorious team in Bonn. In his welcome address he quite adequately captured the mood and relevance of the event:

There is great enthusiasm for football in Germany and therefore your victory in Berne has made such a strong impression on us. We are not as rich as other nations in terms of national events and symbols which provide a strong collective experience. Therefore we are all the more grateful for every event which mediates such a real sense of community to us (Raithel 2004, 161).

It took time for this interpretation of 1954 to become widely accepted, through the passing on of stories from one generation to the next of the communal experience of Zimmermann's radio coverage, of watching the final at the local pub or peeking into the shop window of a radio and television seller with others or waiting for the 'Red Flash.' Over time the victory became a marker of German national identity along with others, such as German pacifism and economic might as well as European integration.

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### 3. The 1974 World Cup and the Denationalization of Football Symbolism

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In the aftermath of the famous 1954 victory the West German football team experienced a period of relative decline, with humiliating defeats against Belgium and France as early as late 1954 and drubbings by lowly Switzerland and Ireland in 1956. England convincingly beat the West Germans twice in 1954 and 1956, a trip to Moscow in 1955 which against the DFB's intentions became heavily politicized due to the forthcoming high-profile Adenauer visit in the Soviet capital in August 1955 also ended in a defeat (Dahlmann 2010).

In the 1958 World Cup the team surprisingly reached the semi-final in the 1958 but went out 1:3 against host Sweden. The match took place in Gothenburg in an overheated atmosphere which was poisoned by anti-German polemics in the Swedish press. In the run-up to the game *Dagens Nyheter* had criticised the

German fans' rowdy behaviour during the tournament, their excessive alcohol consumption and their ostentatious waving of Germany flags. The stadium in Gothenburg was filled with hostile local crowds. There were *Heja Sverige* cheerleaders armed with megaphones by the touchlines to whip up a frenzy and to unnerve the West German team, a practice later banned by FIFA (Andersson 2014, 158). The Swedes won after getting a German player sent off through constant provocation and injuring Fritz Walter, then still the team's most important player. Mirroring a trend of seeing Germans as victims rather than perpetrators which was characteristic of the 1950s, one German paper asked in the aftermath: 'What have we done to the Swedes? In both wars, no German soldier even set foot on Swedish soil' (Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003, 139). For a while afterwards this was not a good time for Swedish tourists to vacation in Germany. The DFB refused to even play Sweden for the next five years and the national enthusiasm that had greeted the 1954 victory became a distant memory.

Over the next decade or so football symbolism in West Germany became 'denationalized,' a process probably also due to the fact that the national team had no great successes to celebrate. This 'denationalization' expressed itself in various ways. There was firstly an increasing reticence among players and the public alike to sing the national anthem and wave the German flag. Crowd behaviour at the matches of the national team became increasingly quiet and subdued. Despite the fact that it is etched into German collective memory, neither Geoff Hurst's famous 1966 second goal that never was, nor the defeat at the hands of the *Azzurri* in the 1970 semi-final in the 'greatest game of all time' (*L'Equipe*) was accompanied by much national fervour or lamentation. It is true that during the 1972 finals of the European Championship incidents of German hooliganism in Belgian cities made the news. When the West German team won the title by demolishing the Soviet team 3:0 in the final (after beating England for the first time ever at Wembley in the quarter-finals), fans rioted on the streets of Brussels and other Belgian cities with chants like 'I, A, O, the Ivan goes KO' (Schulze-Marmeling 2004, 251).

One might argue though that these ugly scenes owed more to excessive drink than to nationalism. Of course, it is safe to assume that the prototypical football fans had fewer problems with the nation than other Germans and did not feel particularly burdened by German history but proud of the national team. However, they usually did not show their allegiance quite so openly. Some of this was due to nationalism per se losing its attractiveness in West Germany's booming consumer society. Moreover, while the introduction of the Bundesliga in 1963 laid the foundations for successes of the national team on the international stage like the European Championships in 1972, the establishment of the professional league went hand in hand with a reinforcement of the traditional regional roots of German football rather than resulting in a strengthening of German football nationalism (Pyta 2006, 16).



The denationalization of national team symbolism reached its peak with the 1974 World Cup hosted by Germany. An important contributory factor in this regard was probably the internationalist orientation of the Munich Olympics two years earlier. Whereas the 1954 World Cup title came to be remembered as a nationalist revival, the 1972 Olympic Games stood for the polar opposite. For the Germans they symbolically marked the country's return to full participation in the international community. This internationalizing trend was then continued, if at a lower level, at the World Cup. However, while the Olympic Games had been used to present an optimistic and modern Germany to the world (Schiller and Young 2010), the World Cup, a sport spectacle that historically lent itself less easily to symbolic exploitation than the Games, was a sober and restrained event in comparison. The journalist Ulfert Schröder described this fittingly at the time when observing the spectators: 'In the German stadia the spectators remain spectators, they remain at a distance, are kept away in the proper sense. They are meant to watch but ought to only get a faint idea of the struggle' (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 11, 1974).

The broadcasts of World Cup matches of the West German team were also rather sober and subdued affairs. When Paul Breitner converted the penalty in the World Cup final against Holland without much further ado, Rudi Michels, the commentator for German state television ARD, calmly suggested: 'Look, ladies and gentlemen, if Breitner keeps his nerve and takes on this task in the 24th minute at 1:0 down, we have to be able to do the same. Goal!' (quoted in Körner 2006, 178). This was miles away from the emotional outbursts of Herbert Zimmermann on the radio twenty years earlier. There is truth to the suggestion that the Germans at the time 'feared all kinds of extremes, all raving seemed suspicious, especially if it could be construed as nationalistic' (Körner 2006, 178). Not even winning the title against the favourite Holland sparked much national enthusiasm. According to Christiane Eisenberg this was because nationalist outbursts were generally frowned upon due to the legacy of the student movement and the politics of détente pursued by Willy Brandt's social-liberal coalition (1997, 121). And there were a few additional circumstances which encouraged a sober reception by the public, including the awful weather which made this World Cup the wettest of all times. The latter probably had a dampening effect on the public mood at a time when none of the football stadia were fully covered by roofs.

More importantly, by 1974 the Federal Republic had also entered a different, less optimistic phase of its history. In 1974 the mood was subdued, not least because of the continued terrorism threat which had blighted the Munich Games and the economic malaise of the 1970s. The *trente glorieuse* with stable growth and low unemployment came to an end with the first oil price shock of 1973. When describing the 'post-boom' era, Tim Schanetzky speaks of a 'great sobering' (2007), Konrad Jarausch of 'the end of optimism' (2008). These were the twilight years of the social-liberal reform era with the pragmatic 'crisis

manager' Helmut Schmidt replacing the political visionary Brandt. One need not go as far as claiming that the pragmatic and result-oriented style of football the West German national team played in 1974 was the equivalent of the new chancellor's policies (Seitz 1987, 98-103). But it is clear that the title was won primarily because the team remained cool when it mattered, stuck to its guns and was determined to exploit every weakness of their opponents (Gebauer 2006, 170). As opposed to the European Championships in 1972 which the West Germans won with flair and panache, in 1974 Holland played the more technically and tactically refined, in short, more beautiful football, and captured the sympathies of most neutral observers.

Rather than the World Cup final it was the extraordinary match against the GDR in Hamburg on 20 June 1974, the only ever encounter between the two German national teams at the finals of a major tournament, which gave rise to expressions of German football nationalism. Footage of the event in Hamburg shows many in the audience waving national flags and engaging in loud 'Germany, Germany' chants. Nevertheless, the 1:0 victory of the underdog against the favourite was generally accepted without much lamentation in the Federal Republic, not least because both teams had already qualified for the next round. The reaction in East Germany was equally unspectacular. While the unexpected victory filled many GDR football fans with pride, the authorities of the state and the party were unprepared to exploit it for propaganda purposes. When West Germany won the title, quite a few East Germans also celebrated, though not publicly as opposed to twenty years earlier due to the fear of reprisals. However, both 'national' loyalties were not mutually exclusive. On the one hand fans were happy when football 'Goliath' West Germany was given a kicking by 'David' GDR, on the other when the 'brothers' in the West managed to win the World Cup, this was also cause for celebration in the East (McDougall 2014).

Two further developments of the 1960s and early 1970s merit attention. Firstly, along with denationalization of football symbolism came the rise of the modern professional in Germany like elsewhere in Western Europe, that is, a new generation of players, who, as Richard Giulianotti put it, 'acquired a "leisure class" status, characterized by high disposable income, plenty of free time and a penchant for conspicuous consumption' (1999, 113). Both Franz Beckenbauer of Bayern Munich and Günter Netzer of Borussia Mönchengladbach along with other high-profile teammates in the national side fitted the bill. In line with broader international trends they became stars like rock musicians who not least through their glamorous 'rich-and-famous' lifestyle provided alternative modes of identification for spectators and fans (Rowe 1995). They replaced an older player type personified by Uwe Seeler. A fair and hard-working player like the Hamburg SV striker who never left this club and played at four consecutive World Cups from 1958 to 1970 was portrayed by the media not unlike members of the 1954 team as representative of the work ethos of the West German population during the 'economic miracle.' Called *Uns Uwe* (Our Uwe), that is, 'one

of us,' Seeler refused lucrative contract offers from Italy and became something of a national treasure. Arguably, he provided a symbolic link between the hard labours of national reconstruction and the comfortable consumerism of the new prosperity in the Federal Republic. Originally hailing from a very modest social background – his father was a labourer in Hamburg harbour – he fittingly followed his football years as the owner of a men's fashion boutique which kitted out the German national team in 1974.

Secondly, high-brow culture and football writers took a positive interest in the game for the first time. If the literature critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki had claimed in 1964 that literature and sports are brothers and enemies (*feindliche Brüder*) because sports is 'so much simpler, more primitive, superficial and direct' (*Die Zeit*, February 14, 1964), a few years later a number of authors no longer agreed. This was the period when Karl Heinz Bohrer praised the stylish and elegant play of the team around Beckenbauer and Netzer on the culture pages of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Bohrer famously coined the catchphrase of Netzer emerging 'from the depth of space' (*aus der Tiefe des Raums*) (1974, 89). Bohrer and others writers closely associated prominent football players with West Germany's liberalization, the social and cultural upheavals of the 1960s and the 'second foundation of the Federal Republic' in '1968' (Herbert 2002; Görtemaker 1999). In the process, Netzer, voted German Player of the Year in 1972 by sports journalists, was elevated to symbolic figure of a different Germany, a country in which the supposed national values of 'fighting spirit and competitive strength' (*kämpferischer Einsatz und Leistungswillen*) had been replaced by individualism and a willingness to speak one's mind both on and off the pitch. The 'rebel' Netzer and the more mainstream Beckenbauer were therefore 'destined to become a personified projection space for the cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s' (Böttiger 2006, 20).

Such assessments have since been repeated by football writers and historians alike, with Habbo Knoch going as far as to claim that Willy Brandt's famous slogan 'Dare more democracy' found its equivalent in German football in these players (2002, 132). In reality they were far from being '1968ers' in the political sense. More accurately, football historian Rudolf Oswald has emphasized a paradigm change in the governing bodies of German football in the 1960s which allowed for the 'rise of the individual player personality' which replaced the 'football soldier' of 1954 (2008, 307). Of course, the processes of liberalization and democratization which characterised the Federal Republic during the period 1960s and 1970s did not stop at the DFB and national team's dugout either. Accordingly, when the 1954 World Cup-winning coach Sepp Herberger retired and passed the baton to his assistant Helmut Schön in 1964, the new national coach made it explicit that he wanted to create a team 'made of talents, individualists and personalities' rather than a *Wehrmacht*-style collective (Havekost and Stahl 2006, 52).

Moreover, Beckenbauer became indeed a good example of the denationalization of football symbolism in the 1960s and 1970s. A week after the final, Beckenbauer commented on the haggling between the national team and the German FA about the players' bonus for winning the title. While a sum of several tens of thousands of deutschmarks per head was eventually agreed, the episode also did not lend itself to inspiring national enthusiasm. When asked by *BILD* whether the money was necessary for the players to feel motivated, the future figure head of the 2006 World Cup in Germany replied:

Of course! The player needs to feel that he is worth something. Then he enjoys playing. Whenever I hear this sh\*\* that we should play for the honour or for the eagle on our chests, that's a joke, and nobody believes in this any longer' (*BILD*, July 15, 1974).

And Beckenbauer was not alone with this opinion, he spoke for most of the team. And given the public reaction to winning the title, many Germans must have agreed with the last part of the statement.

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#### 4. The Renationalization of Football Symbolism

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When Hermann Neuberger, the DFB president and chief organizer of the World Cup looked back at the tournament in an address to the annual meeting of the German FA in October 1974, he expressed his irritation about the sober reception winning the title had received:

Many people in the Federal Republic, even more so abroad, but certainly all of us have had to ask ourselves with bewilderment why people did not feel overjoyed by the second win of a World Cup for German football. One could not feel everywhere – and especially not for any length of time – the exuberant joy of the days of the triumph in Berne. People asked everywhere whether one can no longer feel any real joy here and express it (quoted in Schiller 2014, 188).

As the lack of identification with the success of the national team was not only felt by the German public but the players as well, Neuberger had copies of the national anthem distributed to the team ahead of each international game. On occasion of the 1986 World Cup the team jerseys then spotted a collar in the German colours black, red and gold. It is probably no coincidence that this coincided with the conservative turn (*Wende*) during the early years of Helmut Kohl's chancellorship who wanted Germans to develop a more relaxed attitude towards their nation's past. Two years later then on occasion of the European Championships in Germany the players wore the German colours in broad stripes across their chests (Havemann 2014, 446-7). The players now also sang the national anthem rather than simply enduring it while chewing gum in front of the national television audience. Moreover, they started to ritually assure the press how very proud they were to play in the national colours (Eisenberg 1997, 122).

The final breakthrough of the new football nationalism came on occasion of the World Cup Final in Rome's Olympic Stadium on 9 July 1990 on the eve of German reunification. Winning the World Cup trophy in combination with the euphoria of the German reunification process led to an explosion in the use of national symbols. Even in small towns and in what was still the GDR fans met on market places, formed motorcades, wore the team kit, had their faces decorated with the national colours and celebrated in a joyful manner reminiscent of carnival (Bajohr 2010, 425). Waving the German flag and wearing the national kit now became the order of the day not only in the stadium but also in the public sphere before and after matches and during major tournaments.

Arguably, outstanding successes in another sport also contributed to the re-nationalization of football in Germany. Notably, Boris Becker's triumphs at Wimbledon from the mid-1980s onwards and those of the German Davis Cup team, along with the successes of Michael Stich and Steffi Graf in the women's game, made expressions of national pride in German achievements attractive, while turning tennis in Germany from an upper-class elite activity into a pastime for the masses (Blain and O'Donnell 1994, 261).

Moreover, the international re-nationalization of football symbolism was an international trend. While Giulianotti and Robertson emphasise that 'the game maintained its relevance to national vitality' and 'continued to ritualize national solidarity' in the period from the late 1960s and early 2000s (2009, 23), it is probably more accurate to suggest that in the 1980s and 1990s a qualitative shift occurred in Europe. For example, in the 1970s it would have been unthinkable for players of the French national team to hold hands and sing the Marseillaise which is now the normal pre-match ritual. According to Anna Maike Buß the national football symbolism compensated for a Europe moving toward an ever closer union which 'seem[ed] to reinforce national rivalries between [EU] member states in the realm of sports,' especially after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (2004, 219-20). This thesis goes hand in hand with Frank Bajohr's suggestion that the invention of the Champions League in the same year and the 1995 Bosman ruling which led to an increased internationalization of European club football reinforced this re-nationalization trend (2010, 426).

This new football nationalism was reinforced by the 'springtime of nations' which resulted from international developments like the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War. Therefore, it was not surprising that on the continent expressions of football nationalism became most pronounced in the new nations emerging from the seismic shifts of 1989/90. One telling expression of this which used the rhetoric of national superiority and war, however, was when in the run-up to the quarterfinal of Euro 1996 between Germany and Croatia, Croatian coach Miroslav Blažević stirred up nationalist emotions when announcing that the 'German tanks and *Stukas*' would be met by Croatian 'commando troops and kamikaze pilots' (Oswald 2005, 87). In the event, the Croatian national team lost but carried by a wave of national enthusiasm it

achieved its best ever result at an international tournament a couple of years later, winning third place at the 1998 World Cup finals in France.

Until this very day the Croatians usually play in kit that replicates their national flag and includes the *šahovnika*, the national coat of arms, the red-and-white chessboard emblem which was also the symbol of the fascist *Ustaše* regime. Tellingly, football matches were also vital ingredients in the country's bid for national sovereignty during the violent break-up of Yugoslavia. One of the opening salvos in the war against Serbia happened at Zagreb's Maksimir Stadium on 13 May 1990 when the captain of Dinamo Zagreb, Zvonimir Boban, became a national hero by dropping a karate kick on a Serb policeman who beat a Dynamo fan during ethnic riots at a match against the Serb side Red Star Belgrade (Wilson 2006, 154).

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## 5. Partyotism in 2006, 2010 and 2014

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Looking at the more recent developments in Germany on occasion of the 2006 World Cup hosted by the country and those of 2010 in South Africa and 2014 in Brazil, one cannot but notice that German football nationalism while building on the new acceptance of national symbols since the late 1980s has now entered yet another phase which is determined by factors which were previously of minor importance. Most importantly, this football nationalism/patriotism is no longer ethnically exclusive but for many goes hand with a positive acceptance of Germany as a multi-ethnic society by most fans which however should not be confused with an endorsement of multiculturalism. The ground for this was prepared by a combination of two factors: the ignominious first-round exit from EURO 2000, a rare moment of football weakness of the national team at an important tournament and the reform of the Reich Citizenship Law of 1913 in 1998 by the red-green coalition government under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. While the former inspired the DFB to copy the French example of developing youth football at the grassroots which had led to the World Cup success in 1998, the automatic consignment of dual citizenship to children born in Germany to immigrant families (subject to a final decision in favour of one citizenship before their twenty-third birthday) made it significantly easier for players with a 'migration background' (*Migrationshintergrund*) to play for national football teams from a very young age.

In reality the German national team was never ethnically homogenous throughout its history. Camillo Ugi, the most-capped German international of the pre-World War I era had an Italian father, Fritz Szepan and Ernst Kuzorra in the 1930s were Masurians, the 1954 German goalkeeper Toni Turek was of Czech descent and the Romanian-born Jupp Posipal could have conversed in fluent Hungarian with his opposite player in the 1954 final. Jürgen Grabowski and Pierre Littbarski of the 1974 and 1990 World Cup winning sides could

claim Poles among their ancestors (Schümer 2010, 65). What was new though in 2006 and 2010 was the explicitly positive acknowledgment of the ethnic descent of Lukas Podolski and Miroslav Klose, to name the two attackers who played in both tournaments, in the German public sphere. Ironically, ‘Poldi’ and ‘Miro,’ however, having been born into Polish citizenship, hail from *Spätaussiedler* families, immigrants who could claim patrilinear German descent, and therefore became Germans as a result of Article 116 of the Basic Law (Urban 2011, 158-9).

Following on from initiatives like ‘Say No to Racism’ which resulted from FIFA’s first-ever conference against racism in football in 2001, the German FA has dedicated significant resources to the promotion of ethnic tolerance and integration since the early 2000s. This started under the leadership of DFB President Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder and was given particular emphasis under his successor Theo Zwanziger and included financial and other support for a variety of grassroots initiatives against racism, as well as a frank and open assessment of the association’s own past under National Socialism. The latter led to Nils Havemann’s excellent 2005 study *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz* (Football under the swastika) and the establishment of the annual Julius Hirsch Award for successful ‘integration initiatives’ in the same year. The award is named after ‘Julle’ Hirsch of Karlsruher FV and SpVgg Fürth, the first ever German-Jewish international who in 1943 was deported and murdered at Auschwitz. In 2014, for example, it went to the Schickeria fan group of Bayern Munich who helped to revive the memory of the club’s former Jewish president and refugee from Nazism Kurt Landauer and for making a stand against anti-semitism and racism. A further good example of the German FA’s antiracism campaign was the 2009 TV spot shown before the games of the national team that featured a middle-aged multi-ethnic group of people enjoying a summer garden party. The spot was accompanied by the following voice-over: ‘What have all these people [*Menschen*] in common? Their children play for the German national football team. DFB – *mas integracion*.’<sup>1</sup>

The prime example of this positive attitude towards Germany as a multiethnic society is the way in which Mesut Özil, a third-generation immigrant of Turkish descent from Gelsenkirchen in the Ruhr and exceptionally gifted mid-field player whose main football idol when growing up was Zidane is celebrated in Germany. Özil had his breakthrough on the international stage during the World Cup finals in South Africa. Having previously played for Schalke 04 and Werder Bremen he signed for Real Madrid after the tournament and in 2013 moved to Arsenal London. To an extent still unthinkable a decade ago, Özil, both a German citizen by birth who renounced his Turkish citizenship even earlier than required by the citizenship reform legislation and a practicing

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<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3m4c8j780E>>.



Muslim who recites the Quran before matches, is celebrated as a shining example of the successful integration of a Turk into German society. In 2010 he received a *Bambi* award for this from publisher Hubert Burda, the greatest official accolade German mainstream popular culture has on offer. That he, along with most other players with a 'migration background,' does not sing the national anthem before a game and did not break out in jubilation when all but kicking Turkey out of the 2012 European Championships with a goal in an important qualifier, was widely accepted and probably even increased his stature in the eyes of the German public. It also assured that when playing in Poland and Ukraine during Euro 2012 the German team enjoyed the support of many of the three million German residents with origins in Turkey, as well as that of other minorities living in Germany.

However, while his positive portrayal in the public sphere is indicative of a rising acceptance that German society has become multiethnic, this should not be confused with a positive endorsement of multiculturalism. Like in the German FA's television ad, the keyword usually used in relation to Özil is 'integration,' although as part of the international football jet set he has not lived in Germany for a very long time. In line with current policies and those of national governments in the recent past this does not imply that all cultures are valued equally but prioritizes assimilation into German culture and suggests no more than cultural peculiarities are tolerated as long as they do not threaten the predominance of German culture. German football thus reflects a 'growing concern with the integration of an increasingly heterogeneous society' (Kraus and Schönwälder 2006, 202).

Complementing this point, a recent long-term sociological study among Germans without a 'migration background' argues that 'not patriotism *per se*, but primarily the support of democratic values' reduces ethnic prejudice (Wagner et al. 2012, 328). Its authors show that the borders between nationalism and patriotism are not so clearly demarcated and explicitly warn against political campaigns that would encourage patriotic attitudes. Moreover, as the studies of Heitmeyer's research group demonstrate, political and economic factors which foster a sense of insecurity and precariousness in German society have a much greater, negative, impact on tolerance towards ethnic minorities. For the social psychologist Dagmar Schediwy, the displays of nationalism/patriotism during the public viewings which were encouraged by conservative media like *BILD* can only be understood if one recognizes their primary political function to paper over conflicts in German society (2012).

Whether one agrees with these critical assessments or not, there can be no doubt that the acceptance of cultural differences is made easier if their representatives contribute significantly to the nation's success and play football with such skill as Özil which made the German Under-21 coach Horst Hrubesch declare: 'Our Messi is called Özil' (Schümer 2010, 58). German national team coach Jogi Löw summed up the midfielder's role with the following words: 'I



believe that Mesut is a perfect example of integration. He preserved his Muslim faith and Turkish culture but nevertheless he plays football for Germany. That is a great signal' (*BILD*, October 9, 2010).

However, in order to understand the new German football nationalism/patriotism, a number of further developments need to be considered. The Second World War ended seventy years ago, the Nazis came to power in Germany more than eighty years ago. It is therefore understandable that young Germans especially happily participate in what is after all an international trend, to use football games of the national team as an occasion to celebrate a positive sense of belonging to the nation. Moreover in the recent past, other, notably winter, sports have also led to exuberant expressions of patriotism. Prominent examples are the reactions to the outstanding performance of German ski jumper Sven Hannawald at the Four Hills Tournament in 2001/02 and the enthusiasm for the regular German successes in the Biathlon. These arguably reinforced the positive identification with the DFB eleven.

Then there is the endorsement of the national football team by German politicians. Gone are the days when German chancellors from Adenauer to Schmidt routinely gave a miss to the opportunity of basking in the national football team's glory. From Helmut Kohl's dressing room visit on occasion of the 1990 World Cup title onwards these have become the norm, with the current incumbent Angela Merkel making more of such occasions than her predecessors. Leaving the question of her understanding of the game aside, Merkel's behaviour is probably also based on the recognition of a further important precondition for the new football nationalism, that is, the sport's increased status and respectability. In fact, nowadays football has completely shaken off its former proletarian image and moved from the margins to the centre of modern mass culture. It is now popular throughout German society, having largely overcome whatever age, class and gender barriers existed in the past.

This in turn means that football provides near limitless opportunities for commercial exploitation, with European championship and world cup tournaments being especially important for the national team. If Eisenberg is correct in suggesting that the renationalization of football in Germany in 1990 was supply-led and had more to do with the business acumen of those selling national paraphernalia than German reunification (1997, 122), then the importance of commercial forces for the current German football nationalism/patriotism is even more obvious today. Arguably, the phenomenon is to a large extent driven by the close collaboration of commercial interest, PR, the media and politics, all of which meet with a receptive audience of Germans.

One good example of this on occasion of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa was the chart-topping song 'Schland, oh Schland' (a short form of the *Deutschland* chant at Germany games invented by ProSieben television talk show host Stefan Raab) to the melody of Lena's Eurovision Song Contest-winning hit 'Satellite' by the band Uwe Lena (a pun on Uwe Seeler, the sing-

er's name and the South African *vuvuzela* horns) which was popularized via YouTube.<sup>2</sup> Another was Paul, the octopus and expert predictor of the 2010 World Cup football results whose advertisement value before his death by natural causes was estimated by PR agencies to be in the region of 3.5 million Euros (Schümer 2010, 29).

German historical memory of football events itself has recently become colonized by commercial interest. For example, it can be argued that the current recognition of the 'miracle of Berne' by the German public as a first fleeting expression of a positive national identity after 1945 has at least as much to do with its constant reactivation through television and film as with the passing on of memories connected to it from one generation to the next. This seems to be the lesson of the ceaseless repetition of imagery of the 1954 triumph in conjunction with excerpts from Zimmermann's radio commentary in history entertainment television formats at each major international tournament and of the run-away success of Sönke Wortmann's eponymous movie of 2004. In narrating a sentimental father-son story before the background of the World Cup, Wortmann presents in the *Miracle of Berne* 'a harmonious image of Germany's national identity which clearly has more to do with a post-unification longing for normalization than it does with the reality of the 1950s' (Cooke and Young 2006, 191). Tellingly, the premiere of the movie, which was watched by a total of six million cinema goers, was a high-profile social event attended by members of the elite of German culture, sports, the economy and politics, including Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (Schiller 2014, 200). Its popularity continues until this very day, with a musical based on Wortmann's screenplay premiering in Hamburg in 2014.

The borders between popular culture and football have certainly become ever more porous and it would be easy to find many more examples of this development. One might even argue that as a by-product of football moving to the centre of public attention and due to its role for the entertainment industry, watching the sport has become secondary for large parts of the audience while games of the national team are nowadays primarily occasions for strangers to leave behind the boredom of everyday life and celebrate together in a carnival atmosphere. Experience teaches that whenever popular new leisure pursuits emerge, commercial interests are following not far behind. This is also the reason why, ever protective of its most lucrative product and the television, sponsorship and advertisement deals connected with it, FIFA decided to take control of the fan fests beginning with the 2010 World Cup. While these had originally emerged as local grassroots initiatives in Germany in 2006, in 2010 and 2014 the fan fests were centrally organized by FIFA marketing and extended from cities in South Africa and Brazil to major cities and capitals around the globe.

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<sup>2</sup> < [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bz0rLo\\_fhU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bz0rLo_fhU)>.

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## 6. Conclusion

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This leaves the question as to whether German audiences' reactions to the fortunes of the national team football after the Second World War are good indicators of the state of German national identity: from the post-*Volksgemeinschaft* wave of national pride that greeted the 1954 title, via the largely denationalized displays of football enthusiasm in the 1960s and 1970s, to the partyotism and 'patriotism lite' of 2006, 2010 and 2014. Here the answer is less clear. Certainly, if one recognizes that the current football nationalism/patriotism is not to be understood in a narrow political fashion, then like its predecessors in the 1950s and 1970s it might well be representative of broader attitudes of the German population. However, one must be aware that 'benevolent' patriotism and anti-immigrant feelings are not mutually exclusive, with multiculturalism in the German context existing as a discourse but not as a political and social reality (Kraus and Schönwälder 2006, 2002). Only a few weeks after the 2010 World Cup, Thilo Sarrazin's book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany is abolishing itself), whose racist language and Social-Darwinist arguments come straight from the garbage heap of Germany history, became a bestseller. During EURO 2012 the 'old' nationalism also reared its ugly head again during one of the matches of the national team at Lviv in Ukraine. *Sieg, Sieg* chants could be heard and some right-wing fans waved the Imperial War Flag.

However, when it comes to the German national football team and its style of play as a 'national style of action' which according to Gunter Gebauer (2006) constantly creates and consolidates as well as represents national identity, there is reason to be optimistic. One might be heartened by the fact that the core values of the German game are no longer sacrifice, discipline, perseverance, team spirit, toughness and combativeness but rather that Spanish *tiki-taka*, with quick, short passing, maintaining and quickly regaining possession and lots of movement was the model which won German football the 2014 World Cup in Brazil – that is, if one agrees with Eric Hobsbawm's observation on football and national identity that '[t]he imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of 11 named people' (1991, 143).

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